

As we look to the future as a single regional planning agency, what suggestions do you have to the Board of the RPB? (RPB Staff Survey, May 2006)

Give a good product. Serve the whole 7 county not just one segment of the region.
I would strongly encourage the board to be patient. To allow for mistakes to be made and most of all to support the work that will be done by the RPB. It is important that this new organization by given time to grow, learn, stumble, and prosper without losing the full support of the board. The board needs to be the RPB's champion to the rest of the region until the RPB gets to the point where it is indispensable/relevant to the region.
I would also suggest to the board to not do planning on the cheap. Long term planning is a commitment to a process and that process needs to be supported to successful.
Stay the course. Give your executive director and staff the resources and guidance that will help the organization succeed. Not every current problem of governance or organization can be solved immediately. The main challenge is to make as much rapid change as possible, then keep the harder changes foremost in mind as the board moves into its second year and beyond. Some will take a number of years to address fully. In the long run, don't settle for many partial victories.
BE MORE AGGRESSIVE IN SPRINGFIELD, AND LONG LIVE RPB.
Don't be top heavy with management. Promote the new agency to the general public. Let the world know what we are doing. Don't allow political appointments or interference.
To start, see above. Present management, at least at CATS, is stuck in, "this is how we do it". If we were good we would not be at Sears Tower in the first place. Any suggestion for improvement is swept aside or worse the employee is ridiculed for not knowing what is expected or required. None of us know what is expected to improve. We only know what has to be done to meet government bottom line standards. If that is the case, no improvement, outsource the submission work and save money. ADT can fill out forms.
Define solid goals that can enhance the region. Have an open process. Do not rely on consultants. Provide solutions to the regions problems, do not simply follow Federal regulations. Don't spend all of your effort gaining power if you don't know what you will do with the power.
Need to find adequate funding sources for non-transportation activities
From a regional perspective (also playing the role of a tax payer) the overall process is ambitious, but makes sense to me. But from a staff perspective....it is my feeling that you should keep in mind that you are bringing together 2 groups from 2 very different backgrounds....CATS from an IDOT environment and NIPC from a public / non government organization. In my opinion you can get 2 different reactions to any given issue/initiative. Then with CATS there are union staff, non-union staff, and short-term cadre staff positions each with different histories, concerns and issues ...and hot buttons ..I really do not see a seamless way to address all 3..then mixing in NIPC (the dynamics of which I do not know much about yet) ..challenges abound. Personally, I think that is the reason there were so few questions during Randy's May 17 staff meeting. It seemed to me that the information was good and it was presented in a reasonable way...but I have come to realize that I do not see things the same way that others around me seem to.
Don't forget the little people.

They should get the townships directly involved with the transportation planning process and check to see if the mass transit districts are an unnecessary governmental unit.
Better integration between departments (not just transportation and land use). Be realistic in terms of work load and size of staff. Improve image of agencies with our constituents (municipalities and local leaders).
I think that the agency would be strengthened by providing greater flexibility in terms of assessing the experience of each employee as programs, projects, and tasks are determined and assigned. For too long, my agency has "stove-piped" its operations, neglecting the use of the talent and expertise that could have been employed to accomplish its mission. The region would benefit greatly through the combined databases and resources of NIPC and CATS and that this should be a primary point communicated to the public. The RPB staff would benefit from "all-staff meetings" on a regular basis; that the RPB should practice "Participatory Management," that is, ensuring that everyone working on programs or projects knows that each person counts, has a specific, well-defined role, and is recognized for individual effort, along with collective effort, in achieving assigned goals and objectives/programs and projects.
Do not make hasty judgements in order to satisfy artificially imposed deadlines from the state legislature. If mistakes are made early in the process, they may never be overcome.
Attempt to get more funding from different sources. Get some help with PR. Most people have NEVER heard of NIPC (or probably CATS for that matter). Name recognition is nill. Pick a relevant name & bombard the public with press releases, mailings, etc. Maybe that would generate more interest and \$\$\$\$\$.
Support your employees, respect your employees and the RPB will be an exceptional agency.
Make a real plan...work the real plan...for the people of The State of Illinois not just the politicians.
To get to know all the employees
Try to understand what we really need within the organization to succeed such as good employee/management relationship!
Listen to the staff - we have a great concern for the service we provide to the constituents. Our work has an impact on every person in the region and the environment; we need to have a true voice in the decisions that the RPB makes.
Provide open discussion of policy and practice. Move quickly to remove the potential problems of the RPB and CATS PC not being the MPO. Merge the metro mayors caucus with CATS mayors
Keep in mind that this is a government agency, not a business, and that certain practices have to be followed, like open meetings, hiring practices, and purchasing procedures; get legal advice from firms which are familiar with government, instead of corporations; work more with lower level staff
Tell the CATS staff why NIPC work is important. We do not see it as important. Basically, we see a lot of "visions" that not all 300 government entities in northeastern Illinois care to agree on. However, NIPC brochures are very pretty.

Our agency is now broken, thanks in large part to the Secretary of Transportation who cut us adrift. Even so, we have talented staff who want to do work they can be proud of. We have a long way to go towards rebuilding the agency. I think it can be done with the right leadership, respect for colleagues, and the appropriate participation with all members of the agency. I'd be especially interested in getting to know the RPB members, and members of the sub-committees. By getting acquainted with them, we could begin to have a free flow of ideas about how to reinvigorate the agency. This is especially important because the agency will not succeed unless there is participation and buy-in from all members, from secretaries to board members.

Don't become an adversarial body with the state DOT or with mayors. Though some level of distinction is necessary, part of remaining relevant is not casting the DOT or targeting municipalities as bogeymen.

Clearly define detailed goals for the organization. I don't think the employees know why the RPB exists.

I am proud of my co-workers as they contribute to the "mission" of the organization in the technical sense. The importance of management in the overall picture needs to be recognized and dealt with accordingly. Engineers and urban planners are not trained in business administration.

See suggestions above

With all due respect, I would strongly urge the BD members to be active. The last thing we need is a BD meeting with plenty of empty chairs. Members should be evaluated for attendance over a 2-yr period. Also, you might want to consider a slight variation in the ultimate name of the BD that defines the region.

Good luck

Don't make self-serving decisions or decisions without appropriate input

While providing direction and operational means to the agency as a whole, do not meddle in the day to day functions of the agency.

Please do not engage in personnel matters. Give policy direction, then let Mr. Blankenhorn implement your policy decisions without meddling.

Aim high. Changing "business as usual" at the regional level will require change at the national level. The region must speak with one voice in describing its transportation priorities. It seems to me that this will be a real possibility only if we can convince the United States Congress to listen.

As Randy says...be relevant

There is an opportunity to make an impact if the Board is visionary in it's approach

Be open to suggestions from employees.

Be fair and honest with the employees and continue to have open forms of communication like this or any other way for employees to say what they need to say. Have an employee suggestion box for comments or questions that can be answered throughout the year and not only during a new management introduction.

The organization needs a meaningful name -- a name with a geographic reference.

Integrate into the organization's vision, mission, and goals the underlying principle that ALL land use decisions (transportation included) impact our natural resources, water quality and quantity, biodiversity, etc., and ultimately our quality of life -- and thus should be an integral part of the planning process and not a second thought or sideshow. We have an opportunity to better serve the region's local decision makers by providing educational opportunities and technical assistance to local land use decision makers in order to foster our vision of sustainability for the region as a whole.

Merging some of the outside agencies into the single agency planning realm.

Remain independent and do not let the political climate overshadow the interest of the region and ultimately all of us who live in it.

In terms of policy recommendations and decision making for the future of region, base it mostly on technical expertise of the staff (technical analysis, evaluations, measurable standards for comparisons and ranking).

Keep in mind that the staff that is respected, appreciated and rewarded adequately will be motivated and productive and is also the key to your success.